521 Perhaps the most universal recreation was, as in all illiterate communities, gossip and desultory conversation about the weather, the crops, the iniquity of the government, local disputes, and, on their rare occurrence, lawsuits involving fellow villagers. Despite the grim
181 struggle for survival, the average villager tended to be cheerful, self-respecting, and possessed of a robust sense of humor. He went through life with a continuous concern for his own "face" or prestige among his fellows and with the strong determination and unceasing faith that, despite all, the fortunes of his family would steadily improve.

B. The Pattern of Urban Life

621 Urban life, although it meant a different pattern of work, was closely akin to life in the villages. Town and city dwellers -- perhaps 20 per cent of China's population -- kept their ties with their native villages, returned there whenever possible, and many saw commercial activity in the town only as a means to the acquisition of sufficient wealth to buy farming land and return to the village.[10] The town population, then, was mostly made up of artisans and peasants, plus a small number of landlords, retired officials, county functionaries, and es-
000 tablished merchant families. The county seats

10. Cressey, Land of the 500 Million, pp. 18-19. The 1953 Communist census credits cities and towns (undefined) with 13.26 per cent of the Mainland population.